

# THE VINE

A ST. JAMES AME CHURCH PUBLICATION



FROM OUR EXECUTIVE MINISTER, REV. RAQUEL A. ST. CLAIR, PH.D.

I never had any intention of ever speaking to Rev. Watley beyond a very quick and formal "hello" in passing. As a matter of fact, the first time I was told to that he wanted to meet with me I refused. I was a seminarian worshiping at St. James weekly on my way to my supervised ministry site in Brooklyn. I loved the worship and the preaching, so I came to be fed. On Wednesdays, I would come to noonday since Princeton had no Wednesday afternoon classes. After worship, I would eat the fried fish, try to make myself useful or just get out of the way and find a place to study until Bible Study.

One day, Louise Warren (Rev's secretary at the time) came out of her office and said, "Rev. Watley will meet with you now." Confused and a little frightened, I told her that I did not have an appointment to meet with him. She was unmoved and once again said that he wanted to see me. I told her, "But I don't want to see him. I don't want to go in there." She insisted and with leaden feet I walked what felt like a slow death march to his office. This man, with his deep voice and funny eyes, scared me. I was very clear that I just wanted the opportunity to learn from him FROM A DISTANCE. To this day, I am not exactly sure what he said to me—probably asked about school, ministry, my future plans. I didn't really hear him because I was so afraid sitting in that

office with this legend of a man that I was physically ill. That was the very unlikely start to a chain of events that changed the entire direction of my life.



I continued to somewhat fear Rev. That is until that one day, Rev. Matthew and I got into trouble. We were going through the ordination process together and working on some project at the church. We scheduled a meeting during the Wednesday Bible Study because we couldn't find another time. (I know—DUMB!). So Rev found out during the afternoon before the meeting because we didn't even know enough to know it was wrong and try to hide it. He called us into his office after noonday and told us in a very stern, nonsense tone that we were NEVER to do that again. Rev. Matthew and I stood there wide-eyed and repentant, barely breathing and trying not make

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Pastor Watley was kind enough to take time out of his busy schedule to be interviewed for

this special edition of the Vine, commemorating his 25 years of service to St. James AME Church.

#### HISTORY:

VINE: What do you think are the three most significant historical events during the past twenty-five (25) years?

WATLEY: Ok, number one, the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States.

Number two, the impact of globalization on politics, the economy, etc. and that we can no longer think in terms of nationalist perspective. Whatever happens in one place, directly affects those in another place.

And number three I would say, the impact of technology and how that has radically changed our lives.

#### VINE: How have these events impacted Christianity?

WATLEY: I don't think the full impact of that [Obama as president] will hit us for a while. For example, children born now and for the next eight years of their life, all they will know is a black President. The whole self-perception, perspective, and ethnic identity change, as must the dialogue. What then, is the meaning of the black church in that context? I

think the African-American colleges with their historic mission, must remain so that people will be coming up thinking about themselves differently, unless there is a vital family structure in place.

to be careful what you say because you don't know how the gospel is going to be interpreted by people who do not share your same experience.

#### POP CULTURE

**VINE: What are your thoughts about the effects of music videos, TV., political scandals and corruption, as well as other media on Christian culture?**

WATLEY: Recalling a book I've read, *Christ and Culture* by H. Richard Niebuhr, I believe the church has to have and send a clear message that is value driven. The challenge to the African-American church is that we have to know how to use and transform the new cultural mediums to reach this next generation.

Too much exposure is causing too much disaffection. In the past, we were told to leave the room when certain things were discussed because it was "grown folks' business." Now, there is no more grown folks' business. There is nothing sacred anymore. That impacts and builds a negative cynicism unless there is another voice. The church will have to work harder and be more creative to overcome the detrimental impact of too much exposure along with the popularization of figures that do not embody sound values.

You know, I can't understand it, but I welcome Gospel Rap, if that's what it's going to take for them to hear and be transformed.

What I'm sensing in the culture is a suspicion and hostility for religion

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and specifically, the Christian church. The whole notion of the Red Mass (A traditional Roman Catholic Ceremony/Mass celebrated annually for judges, attorneys, law school professors, and others involved with law, to pray for wisdom) now being attacked when we (the country) were founded upon religious principles.

I think that one thing that caused this is not simply an overbearing on our part, but a kind of increasing secularization and demonic influence seeking to make people hostile toward the Church [like] when we were banned from the theater in West Orange. To think that someone would go through so much trouble to research the lease of the theater to see that the lease only allows them to show movies and to report that. There was a time when the Church was respected. Now, there is hostility which I think is demonic.

**VINE: Have you noticed an increase in (St. James') active membership over the past 25 years? Increased tithing membership?**

WATLEY: Yes, because we're teaching! For people coming to church without traditional religious training, asking them to tithe \$100.00 a week even when they are making \$1,000.00 a week might seem like a whole lot of money and they don't understand it.

I think people are interested in and passionate about service, but the church falls down when we don't give them the kinds of service that challenges them to use their gifts. Like now, without the dance minis-

try, I'm not sure that we would have all those young people in church.

I think the church needs to adjust to the schedules of people. People now have so much to do. There was a time when there wasn't so much to do. Now, 9:30am has become the new 11:00am, especially for young married couples who want to come earlier and have more of the day for other things.

**VINE: What is your view of how worship has changed over the past 25 years?**

WATLEY: Worship has become more praise oriented now and less formal, as well as less denominational. Our Wednesday service works because there are people coming from all denominations. Traditionally rigid denominational lines have become less rigid and people now seek ministries.

Another thing that I have seen change is the need for security and insurance. We spend over \$100,000.00 a year for security and I never thought I'd see the day when I need to have malpractice insurance.

**VINE: St. James is blessed to be a "generational" congregation. Some churches seem to struggle with retaining active younger members, especially between the ages of 13-30. To what would you contribute St. James' success with strong membership, attendance, tithing and active participation among that age group?**

WATLEY: I don't think we are strong with the group 13-30. I noticed during our generational Sunday that there was more gold, purple, and red; and less green and blue. We need to develop that group and are going to start

specifically targeting that group. We are right within walking distance of colleges; we need to be intentional in terms of developing that group. That is one of the things I like about South Orange PAC is that you can walk right from Seton Hall to the location.

The same thing holds true with developing the men's ministry. Men because of the whole history, men in churches are resentful of preachers. They have to respect the leader. They don't believe in the person. They have to be developed. To meet that end, we have for example, the G-Men, Men's Bible study, I make sure that I spend time meeting with and talking with them often.

**In closing the interview, Pastor was asked for any additional comments and responded with the following:**

I am grateful that the Vine is part of our church's life. I've felt that we have lagged in terms of our communications network. We have a changing membership which is good, but we don't know each other. So I'm glad to see us getting a viable newsletter that is more than pictures, but does have some substantive content.

Rev. Watley, the newsletter team is thankful for your service and acceptance of this new print ministry. Thanks again for your time, vision, and consideration.



THE GALA





# Congratulations Pastor Watley



25 Years of... **Leadership & Vision**



Photos: Jimmy Richardson

Design: Maurice Quick





**O**n the evening of October 1<sup>st</sup>, hundreds of us gathered together to celebrate our Pastor's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We were treated as royalty from the very onset of the evening and throughout this momentous occasion. An air of elegance greeted us as we walked through the corridors of the Westmount Country Club. We were treated to an assortment of splendid hors d'oeuvres, matched only by the stunning array of colors that spectacularly enveloped the evening's attire. There was not a hair out of place or a nail that wasn't polished. We came out in our finest to celebrate the man of the hour, our very own Reverend William D. Watley, PhD.

The Reverends Marcia Sapp-Salter and Patrick Clayborn led the "St. James Singers" in a very fitting tribute to our Pastor. From the opening note, the air was almost palpable and you just knew that the presence of God was in the room. It

was an awesome thing to have witnessed.

The entire room was full of dignitaries, family members, and friends from across the nation. Bishop Norris' opening remarks gave us a hint as to what was to come. Everyone in attendance could have spoken appreciatively about our beloved Pastor, but the guest speaker, Bishop T.D. Jakes surmised many of our thoughts and feelings for the evening. His message was heartfelt, genuine, and sincere as his words struck a chord in all in attendance. His words were more than appropriate with respect to the man of honor. Yes, our Dr. Watley is indeed the innkeeper that Bishop Jakes so eloquently spoke about.

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, we had the privilege and honor of paying tribute to one of the most prolific, erudite, learned men of the cloth in this country. He is not just a preacher,

but a teacher extraordinaire. He not only enlightens, but educates you; he not only captivates, but challenges you. During every service, there is always a message that gives you more than you can ever anticipate. He makes you want to attend every service for fear that you will miss something that will truly enlighten you.

Well done Reverend Watley, you are truly a man of distinction. We are so very proud to be your



## REFLECTIONS FROM OUR FIRST LADY, BY ELIZABETH VERNER BARKLEY

**H**ow well do you know your First Lady? True enough, for 25 years we have had the pleasure of worshipping and sharing many good times with her, but how much do you *really* know about First Lady, Muriel L. Watley? I, like so many others, see her as warm-spirited, humble and a woman after God's own heart - but what else? Through a message to her granddaughter and other revealing experiences, you'll find that these perceptions are *indeed* reality.

**VINE: What is one thing that your church family would be surprised to know about you?**

**FL:** The church family would probably be surprised to know that while in Waco, Texas, I was a television talk show host and that I co-hosted a UNCF (United Negro College Fund) telethon.

**VINE: In 20 years, your granddaughter Madison is the first lady of a big historical Black church; what is the one piece of advice or nugget of wisdom that you would pass on to her?**

**FL:** If Madison becomes a first lady 20 years from now, I would tell her that first, it is a special privilege to serve as the helpmate to a Christian minister. Graciousness, kindness, and a spirit of

discernment will stand her in good stead. By putting God first as in all other areas of her life, He will direct her pathway. God is the most important person she must satisfy. People can be hard to please, but God blesses richly those who serve Him in Spirit and in Truth. Remember the examples set by Gran, Mom, and Nana - take good care of your husband and family. Meditate on His word and enjoy the role of First Lady. In the black church it is a distinct honor - not to be above anyone - but as an



Continued

Dedicated Beautification Ministry members gave it their all in producing -THE EVENT OF THE YEAR. The purpose of this Ministry is to beautify the Church and all related events. Therefore, we were more than honored to provide the decorations for our esteemed pastor, Rev. William D. Watley's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The planning for this event commenced in June and was nonstop until the event ended thanks to devoted members Lita McPhail-Roye, Shante Holland, Betty Williams, Amy Brown, Shirley Jones, Mel-Christopher Young, Sara Porterfield, and Tracey L. Cooper-Singleton (Tanya Blue and Vesta Goodwin-Clark – Ministry Leaders).



Our mission was to create an respected the insights, talents, and elegant and timeless look befitting abilities of this core group of our beloved Pastor with the members. Our decorations right amount of pizzazz to seamlessly matched the ambiance compliment the opulence of the of the Westmount's and we all Westmount Country Club. It is worked exceptionally "well" great to report that that mission together. We look forward to was achieved beautifully and decorating Pastor's 50<sup>th</sup> professionally under the direction anniversary and beyond. of Tanya Blue, Co-Chairperson of

the anniversary gala. Shirley Jones said it best, "Tanya demands so sweetly", so you really respect her and will perform the most meticulous tasks for her, such as adding nearly 500 rhinestones to satin bases, which were painstakingly pinned one by one to "make it POP" as she often says. She was always open to collaboration and truly

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR FIRST LADY, (CONT'D FROM PG7)

opportunity to set an example of finer Christian womanhood.

**VINE: Who was or is the greatest influence in your life and why?**

**FL:** Sister Edith W. Ming\*, now deceased, has had the greatest influence on me as a First Lady. When I was the youngest minister's wife in the First Episcopal district, Sister Ming so impressed me as a very gracious hostess and First Lady. She had a flair for words and special little gifts she shared from her worldwide travels. Her table settings were impeccable and there was such an atmosphere of warmth in the home. I was mentored by her as she would take baby Jennifer and I along to various meetings. Everything she

did seemed easy and left a memorable impression on me.

\* Edith White Ming was First Lady to the late Bishop Donald George K. Ming of the First Episcopal district.

**VINE: If you could use one phrase or passage of scripture to describe your last 25 years at St. James, what would it be?**

**FL:** My favorite scripture is Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things will be added unto you." God knows our every need and when we diligently seek Him first, he provideth all.



Mrs. Watley, the Saint James family thanks you for your graciousness, your kindness and your spirit of discernment. Thank you for showing your love for us through Christ. We love you.

Webster defines "Breakthrough" as both a noun, "an offensive thrust that penetrates and carries beyond a defensive line in warfare," and a verb, "an act of breaking through an obstacle or a sudden advance especially in knowledge or technique, or a person's first notable success." It also says that the term is often used as attributive meaning that normally, something positive occurs when a breakthrough is experienced. Rev. Sir Walter Mack, St. James' Revival Lecturer, told us that, "If breakthrough is going to happen, it is important that you experience a resurrection and you experience life. Revival calls us to this..." and resurrection and life are what we experienced this year!

The sanctuary was vibrant with stomping feet, hand claps, and hand waves at our 2009 Revival Worship Service. Rev. Dr. William D. Watley made his formal introductions as the sanctuary was filled with uplifting song and verses of praise! The Holy Spirit fell upon, swept through, and shook up the sanctuary. It was clear that breakthrough was on the way! After prayer time with Min. Bankole Akibinu and scripture reading by Rev. Garvey Ince, our Mass Choir sang with surrender in mind, 'Lay My Burdens Down.' As the Holy

Ghost continued to sweep over the sanctuary, the spirit was high for another rousing 20 minutes! Rev. Watley then introduced our guest revivalist, Dr. William Curtis from Mt. Ararat Baptist Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Dr. Curtis began his



preaching by stressing the importance of appreciating life's discordant notes. His sermons were based on the Book of Nehemiah. On the first night, he preached about "God's Discordant Notes." He noted that sometimes God allows everything to run synchronized then suddenly we are hit by a snag, disappointment, or a 'bad note.' Dr. Curtis paralleled God's way to the work of a skilled musical composer. Composers often create a perfect score, but somewhere along the script a 'bad note' is intentionally inserted. He explained that the composer

does this to keep the listener in "tuned and alert." A perfect musical score would lull the listener to sleep. This pattern is similar to the work of our Lord who orchestrates our life. Our problems are not always Satan rooted. We must learn how to build muscles of faith and stay on key! Don't let 'bad notes' change your key! Remember that God is the composer!

On night two, Rev. Dr. William Curtis preached about the management of sharp curves or angles of life and how we approach and navigate them. We were reminded that God will sometimes provide the curves to test our faith. Yet, **God will get us through** and get us where He wants us to be.

Night three focused on zeal. While God is pleased with our desire to please Him, zeal takes it a step further. Sometimes we need to be reminded to honor being as blessed as we are simply because we are in God and He is in us, no matter what the circumstances are! Dr. Curtis then asked the crowd, "Are you happy in Jesus alone?" You can only believe that the response from the crowd was filled with positive affirmations and saved souls for a successful ending to Revival 2009!

#### FROM THE EXECUTIVE MINISTER (CONT'D. FROM PG. 11)

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any sudden movements. When Rev was done, he looked at us and barked, "What are the two of you getting ready to do now?" Sheepishly, we looked at each other and said with bowed heads, "We were going to go to lunch...." He paused for a moment, reached into his pocket and pulled out a \$20 bill and said, "Here, I guess you all need lunch money. Now go on and

don't do that again!" Of course, we had to hug him before we left. I remembered thinking that Rev is like Psalm 30:5a, "For his anger is but for a moment, but his favor is for a lifetime." I was no longer afraid.

My life has been indelibly marked by this man who loves God and God's people. I have not

known Rev. Watley for the past 25 years but for the time that I have known him, I have been graced by his presence in my life and privileged to have him with me at some of the most important points of my journey: ordinations, graduations, the deathbed of my father, the funerals of loved ones. He has taught me by example the lessons of faithfulness, perseverance, excellence,

# St. James AME Church



REV. WILLIAM D. WATLEY, PH.D.  
SENIOR PASTOR

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**SUNDAY WORSHIP**  
1 CHURCH/2 LOCATIONS:  
7:30am, Newark  
9:30am, SOPAC  
11:00am, Newark  
See [www.stjamesame.org](http://www.stjamesame.org) for more detail

**CORE VALUES**  
Spirituality, Education,  
Stewardship, Service &  
Evangelism

*Growing For God's Glory!*

## MISSION STATEMENT

As the redeemed people of God called church, our mission is to grow fully mature followers for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We believe that full growth and maturity includes the Lordship of Jesus Christ over our time, talents, tithes and offerings.

**BIBLE STUDY TIMES:**  
Tuesday 12:00pm WOW  
Tuesday 6:30pm Women's  
Tuesday 7:30pm Prayer Service  
Wednesday 11:00 General  
Saturday 8:00am Men's



## IN THE BEGINNING (CONT'D. FROM PG. 11)

integrity, and having a brother and employee of St. James, and a graduate of Princeton Seminary not take himself too seriously and is so transparent about his struggles. That is a real faith to me. That is a shepherd I can follow.

for himself, big enough to include me! God bless you, Rev, and happy anniversary! It really is just the beginning!

I am an itinerant elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a mem-

## NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007

Time	Day	Event
10:00am—2:00pm		
5:00pm—7:00pm	November 20	Thanksgiving Distribution
10:00am	November 26	Thanksgiving Service
10:00am-2:00pm & 5:00pm—7:00	December 3/4	Christmas Basket/ Toy Sign up
10:00am—2:00pm & 5:00—7:00pm	December 18	Christmas Basket Distribution
7:00pm	December 19	Christmas Toy Distribution
	December 24	Christmas Eve Candle-light Service
8:00pm SOPAC/	December 31	Watch Night Service
10:00PM NEWARK		

### ADDRESS BLOCK

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